



# Guide to supporting the modern workforce



**Anticipate**

**Lead with data**

**Create results**

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# Investing in well-being is investing in the future

Do you still believe that the only way to improve well-being at work is to change working conditions and methods? Does it frustrate you that electric desks, stress balls and mini workouts during breaks have not improved work efficiency? Do you believe that well-being is predetermined by your inherited genes anyway? Then it's time to stop and take a closer look at the statistics.

**A person's well-being is determined more by their lifestyle (40%) than their genetics (30%).<sup>1</sup>** The remaining components include working conditions and other environmental factors, health care and social situations. You cannot change your genetics, but you can change your lifestyle. Yesterday's choices become today's reality – so it's time to help your employees make smart choices!

If made frequently and regularly, trivial-seeming choices can have a significant impact on how you cope at work and during leisure. You don't have to carefully weigh each choice – the key is to be aware of the overall impact of your daily choices on your body and mind. To make better choices and, therefore, improve well-being, you need to take a holistic approach. You need a service that reveals how the body reacts to different situations in everyday life and at work. That's exactly what Firstbeat provides.



*The smartest companies have already realised that using Firstbeat's analytics is the easiest way to find out how a certain part of their personnel or the whole group is actually doing. Should your company move from guesswork to facts, too?*

Juho Tuppurainen  
Vice President of Firstbeat

<sup>1</sup>McInnis et al (2002). The Case For More Active Policy Attention To Health Promotion. Health Affairs, 21 (2): 78-93.

# The building blocks of a resilient workforce

The world is constantly changing, and the way we work is changing with it. Sedentary work is on the rise as we sit behind our computers. We're taking fewer breaks despite the same pressure to deliver. And the line between work and leisure time is becoming increasingly blurred. It's no wonder 15.4 million working days were lost to work-related stress, anxiety or depression in the UK in 2017/18.<sup>1</sup>

It's never been more important that staff can handle the mental strain of work. Building resilience is not only a competitive advantage for your company, but it helps combat poor mental and physical health and lets your business stand out from competitors.

The role of well-being in a resilient workforce is better appreciated than in previous decades. Forward-thinking companies now understand the importance of employee happiness and ensuring staff feel supported and their work is meaningful. Yet, plenty of decision-makers still rely on guesswork when it comes to the relationship between their staff's work ability and everyday life. Firstbeat replaces that guesswork with accurate data that reveals the factors impacting resilience and work ability.

## What are the elements of modern work ability?

Work ability is based on stress management, sleep and physical activity. When these factors are balanced it creates resilience - the ability to adapt to, and manage, difficult or stressful situations more successfully. Sleep is the most important of these three elements, as it determines how the next day will turn out. According to sleep specialist Henri Tuomilehto, the daily well-being of mind and body is based on successful recovery, and successful recovery, in turn, is based on sufficient high-quality sleep. Effective sleep is an investment in your future. When you sleep well, you work well!



**Manage  
stress**



**Enhance  
recovery**



**Exercise  
right**

**See pages 5–6 for more information about the three key components of work performance.**

<sup>1</sup><http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/stress.pdf>

# A small issue is still an issue

Even the small things can affect work performance. Seemingly minor ailments like headaches or allergy symptoms can, in fact, decrease performance significantly. And small lifestyle choices like alcohol consumption and smoking have an impact too. Below you'll see the cost of these small issues and choices to UK business. How much are they costing your country?



The performance of an employee dealing with one of these 'small problems' is like driving a car with only one headlight. It warrants a warning from the police for safety reasons, but employees with comparable problems often go unnoticed. It pays to pay more attention, too, as the work performance and productivity of such an employee is only half the normal rate.

## The significant costs to business per year:

- |                                                                     |                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| £ Sleep deprivation<br>£40 billion <sup>2</sup>                     | £ Work-related stress<br>15.4 million working days <sup>5</sup> |
| £ Physical inactivity<br>£8 billion cost to UK economy <sup>3</sup> | £ Mental health problems<br>£35 billion <sup>6</sup>            |
| £ Alcohol consumption<br>£7.5 billion <sup>4</sup>                  | £ Smoking breaks<br>£8.4 billion <sup>7</sup>                   |

<sup>1</sup> Sickness Presenteeism: Measurement and Management Challenges (Nottingham Business School, 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Why Sleep Matters: Quantifying the Economic Costs of Insufficient Sleep (Rand Corporation)

<sup>3</sup> Health at Work: Economic Evidence Report 2016

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/much-alcohol-related-absence-costing-business/>

<sup>5</sup> Work-related stress, depression or anxiety statistics in Great Britain, 2018

<sup>6</sup> Mental Health at Work: The business costs 10 years on (Centre for Mental Health)

<sup>7</sup> British Heart Foundation and the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR)



# Stress – a good servant but a bad master

## What is stress anyway?

Stress is a normal bodily response that increases alertness. It is triggered by physical or mental factors, such as after intense physical exercise or when nervous.

## The difference between helpful and harmful stress

Short-term stress can actually help us at work. By increasing your heart rate and accelerating cognitive skills, a small dose of stress can help us carry out tasks efficiently. It can increase your performance and motivation, help you concentrate, and provides a timely boost of energy.

Long-term stress, however, can be harmful as it keeps your body in a state of high alert and prevents it from calming down. Excessive and long-term stress is a health risk that can lead to a variety of illnesses and exhaustion.

## Identify long-term stress

### Physical symptoms:

- sleep problems
- physical ailments, pain
- ill health, susceptibility to infections
- indigestion
- decrease or increase in appetite
- increased blood pressure, cardiac symptoms
- decreased recovery time, chronic fatigue

### Psychological symptoms:

- mood changes
- memory disorders
- lack of motivation
- anxiety
- irritability, restlessness
- concentration problems
- increased or decreased need for intimacy
- changes in the use of stimulants or intoxicants

## Relieve stress

An optimal balance of stress and recovery enables development in various aspects of life. If you feel stressed, take action to solve the problem. When you respond to stress, you can achieve significant results even with small changes while taking care of your resilience at the same time. Regular meals, following a varied diet and sleeping well are simple but effective ways to improve your well-being and ability to cope. Light, restorative physical activity and improved fitness are other ways to prevent excessive mental strain. There's no need to achieve perfection: a good rule of thumb is to make healthy choices 80 percent of the time.

**Workload pressures and a lack of managerial support are among the main factors causing work-related stress, depression or anxiety in the UK.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Labour Force Survey

# Recovery is a game of skill

Recovery refers to reduced activation levels in the body when you are, for example, asleep or just relaxed. Everyone needs to recover regularly to maintain health and performance and to restore energy. During recovery, your body rests and restores itself both physically and mentally.

## How to recover?

Recovering well is a game of skill, and you can get better at it. In addition to high-quality sleep, rest and relaxation, being physically fit and following a healthy diet also support recovery. Furthermore, good relationships, positive hobbies, humour and a positive outlook on life all serve as a counterbalance to stress.

## Why is recovery important?

After a good night's sleep, you feel refreshed and everything flows smoothly. After sleeping poorly, on the other hand, it's difficult to keep your thoughts together and nothing seems to go as planned. It's a good idea to find peaceful and restoring moments during the day, too, because relaxing even for a few minutes helps to improve alertness and work performance. And once you're on the ball, your mood will improve and you will be more motivated to work.



# Exercise improves resistance to stress

## Increase your well-being with physical activity and better fitness

A fitter employee is a more resilient and productive employee and exercise is one of the most efficient ways to improve the quality of recovery and resilience. Even light physical activity such as walking boosts metabolism and improves health but, to get in better shape, you occasionally have to do exercise that gets you out of breath. Doing exercise you enjoy has restorative qualities too - improving sleep and maintaining balance in your life

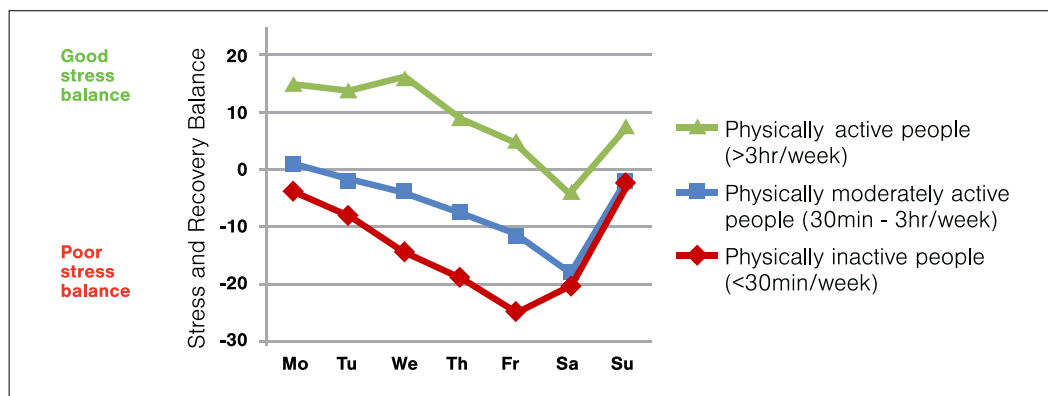
A good baseline fitness can have short and long-term benefits. Improving your fitness from a 'poor' to 'average' level can reduce the risk of premature death by 15%. Whilst improving your fitness can have an immediate impact on work performance, too, thanks to its influence on recovery and stress management.

## Did you know...

**Firstbeat's Fitness Level feature** estimates a person's true aerobic fitness in relation to people of the same age and gender from just one 30-minute walk. The personalised Fitness Level score has proven to motivate individuals to increase physical exercise and lets decision-makers demonstrate the return on investment of wellness initiatives.

## Regular exercise has been shown to improve work ability

- People who exercise more than three hours a week have the best ability to recover.<sup>1</sup>
- Physical activity is linked to a lower objective stress level during work days.<sup>2</sup>
- People who engage in physical activity regularly have less absences due to illness.<sup>3</sup>
- Individuals with good fitness levels are more resilient to the pressures of work



Firstbeat's database shows that individuals who are physically active have a better balance between stress and recovery, and they are able to recover more quickly from stressful days than individuals who are not physically active.

<sup>1</sup> Firstbeat 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Teisala, T., Mutikainen, S., Tolvanen, A., Rottensteiner, M., Leskinen, T., Kaprio, J., Kolehmainen, M., Rusko, H., Kujala, U. (2014). Associations of physical activity, fitness, and body composition with heart rate variability-based indicators of stress and recovery on workdays: a cross-sectional study.

<sup>3</sup> Holopainen, E., Lahti, J., Rahkonen, O., Lahelma, E., & Laaksonen, M. 2012. Liikunta ehkäisee pitkiä sairauslomia. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto. Suomen Lääkärilehti, 67:14-15, 1155-1159.



# The consequences of choices



This is Anne. After a good night's sleep, she eats a good breakfast and leaves for her office. It's a slightly rainy day but Anne decides to walk to work anyway. She's checked the forecast and brought an umbrella with her. It's only a few kilometres and the journey to work passes quickly.

Her work keeps her busy during the morning, but a healthy lunch with a colleague revitalizes her. They cheerfully share yesterday's event with each other whilst joking around.

After an afternoon meeting, it's a good time for a coffee break. Anne spends the second break of the day doing stretching exercises because they boost her circulation and clear her head. After a glass of water, she's ready to get back to work.

'Ha! Got that tender finished!' It's the perfect time to finish the day and start a relaxing weekend dedicated to family and hobbies.



This is Pete, who watched an action film last night, enjoying beer and popcorn. After the film, Pete quickly fell asleep but kept waking up through the night and is now very tired. He has a job to go to, though.

At work, Pete has a lot of trouble putting his thoughts together. Work progresses slowly but relatively surely.

There is not enough time for lunch today, though. Maybe a double decker burger from the drive through would ease his rumbling stomach.

Pete makes it through the day by sipping coffee and energy drinks. 'I'm so damn good at this!' he spurs himself on self-confidently with sleepy eyes.

It's five o'clock and the day is done. However, Pete decides to finish up one more thing, so he stretches his work day to nine hours. Let's hope his weekend is full of a bit more recovery!

## Play the Firstbeat game

Take the test to see what consequences everyday choices have on your work ability!  
[firstbeat.com/lifestyleassessment-game](https://firstbeat.com/lifestyleassessment-game)

# It's the weekend – are you going to party or recover?

With another long week behind you, a relaxing weekend lies ahead - but how relaxing is it going to be? According to the Firstbeat database, Saturday is actually the most stressful day of the week.<sup>1</sup> Why is this?

On Friday, the hustle of the work day often lingers on the mind after leaving the workplace, which delays recovery. Some might have great expectations and a lot of activities planned for the weekend, which leaves little time for actual rest. Drinking alcohol and staying up late also take their toll - relaxation doesn't always mean recovery.

## Tips for a fresh and energetic weekend

- If your weekend is as scheduled as your work days, it is difficult to find time to recover. Stop glancing at your watch. Declutter your schedule and take a relaxing walk in the park instead.
- Delaying things you have to do is bound to create stress. Take care of the most important tasks as soon as possible so you can put your feet up with a good conscience every day.
- Limit business to the working week. Checking your work e-mail on your day off is like jumping deliberately in a muddy puddle in your dress shoes - seems fun at the time but you'll regret it afterwards!
- It feels good to blow off a bit of steam every now and then with a big night out, but a weekend spent burning the candle at both ends can leave you drained. Refocusing your desire to party onto more peaceful activities can help. A trip to the spa or sharing a coffee with friends will refresh you and give you energy long into the week ahead.



<sup>1</sup>Firstbeat - Optima life. 2016



*Strange but true! Saturday is often the most stressful day of the week, even though most people do not even work then. The fact is that even fun activities can exhaust you, which leaves you even more depleted on Monday than you were on Friday. So remember to take the time to relax and reset your mind on your days off, too – and not only by drinking alcohol. Perhaps the coming week will appear in a somewhat brighter light!*

Niina Karstunen  
Wellness Specialist at Firstbeat



# Help staff reach their health and performance potential

If you asked your staff if they'd like to feel better and have more energy, how many do you think would raise their hands? We bet every one of them. Firstbeat helps every individual reach their health and performance potential with science-backed confidence.

## Employee well-being is a competitive advantage

Well-being and work ability are based on balancing stress, exercise, fitness and recovery. But we're all individuals, and what works for some, might not work for everyone. The answer has to come from within.

Firstbeat provides a 3-day measurement that reveals how an individual responds to daily choices. Every employee receives a personal report that helps them pinpoint what is, and is not, working for them. And expert coaching helps each individual develop their own work ability and recovery skills.

Employers receive aggregated, anonymous group data that places key well-being and business decisions on firm scientific ground rather than guesswork. Reliable data highlights where to invest resources and indicates where changes could produce immediate results.

## We have conducted over 300,000 measurements and work with multi-national businesses. We help you confidently:

- Focus resources where they are needed most
- Identify the factors impacting well-being
- Ensure the work environment is maximizing potential
- Motivate employees to take control of lifestyle choices
- Optimize well-being and support mental health

## Improve business and staff performance with Firstbeat



# Specialists at your service

Firstbeat's offering includes a personal report for each employee and an anonymous group report for the employer. In addition, a specialist at Firstbeat will provide coaching to each employee or to each employee group. Individual results and coaching promote a holistic approach and have been shown to motivate lifestyle changes to improve general well-being.

## Recovery boils down to small choices

*A health nut's holy trinity is composed of exercise, rest and nutrition. Don't judge yourself if you don't have the time or energy to exercise as much as you want. Instead, try to fit physical activity of some sort into every day. Find something you have time for and that strains your body enough but not too much. Sometimes you lose your own sense of how you're coping: you begin to feel as if it's normal to be stressed, overburdened and tired. That's a good time to stop and ask yourself how you're really doing. A healthy diet and drinking enough water through the day support recovery.*

Katie Patman  
Customer Success Manager

## Physical activity boosts your energy level at work and at home

*Exercise always pays off! As is well known, all the reasons that stop us from exercising regularly are really excuses. Active people experience less stress, and their stress levels have been shown to be lower than of those engaged in less physical activity. In the end, the choice of sport or the level of intensity do not matter as long as people are active and it feels meaningful to them. Collective exercises at work are a great way to improve the well-being of personnel and to raise team spirit. Humans are made to move and work. Without movement, nothing happens. Anywhere.*

Philip Walker  
Key Account Manager

## There are many ways to manage stress

*It's best to be creative when minimising stress. If your working hours are flexible, try sleeping a couple of hours longer and going to the office only at 10 am. Start your day with the more challenging tasks instead of checking your e-mail: according to studies, you are at your best in the morning. If the weather permits, take your laptop and move your office to the park or arrange a walking meeting. Outdoor stimuli can generate new ideas, and you will get functional exercise to boot. If your colleagues bug you, arrange yourself a "meeting" in which you just work by yourself – with no disturbances, you can work more efficiently. In addition, try to arrange yourself a weekly moment when you don't do anything at all. A moment of idleness might double your productivity!*

Mikke Salminen  
Wellness Specialist at Firstbeat



# ‘We’re here to work, no matter what the condition!’

If you run a company and agree with the heading, it’s high time to stop and think. At Firstbeat, we do everything in our power to help employees stay healthy, stay alert, and maintain high performance at work. We give company decision-makers the tools to see where you can make a real difference.

You choose whether to manage by data or by guesswork. Depending on your choice, your company could thrive or stagnate. Using information based on measured data, you create added value for your company and show your employees that you care. A company that takes care of its employees stands out and attracts a skilled workforce.

## Pioneers are winners

There are all sorts of questionnaires and forms that measure work ability, but they do not give reliable results. Top-level athletes realise that to achieve maximal performance, they need to supplement hard exercise with accurate information about their body. That’s why over 22,000 athletes worldwide use Firstbeat technology. You can strengthen the work ability of your staff using this same world-class technology by introducing Firstbeat into your business.

## Simple yet effective! Three easy steps to using Firstbeat successfully



### 1. Gather group information and create the order

Register participants, decide the timetable and select your feedback model.



### 2. Communicate effectively

Take advantage of the Wellness Programme toolkit to communicate with participants via your internal networks.



### 3. Get the full picture and follow up

Group reports and Firstbeat coaching help you implement changes based on the data. Follow up measurements track progress.



Contact us to arrange a free specialist visit to discuss how Firstbeat's services can be customised specifically for your company's needs:

[firstbeat.com/en/wellness-services/corporate-wellness/](https://firstbeat.com/en/wellness-services/corporate-wellness/)

People at their best



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